



Penny Bernard Schaber

STATE REPRESENTATIVE 57th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Serving the heart of Appleton

For Immediate Release
October 3, 2011

Contact: Rep. Bernard Schaber
608-266-3070

Assembly, Senate Committees to Hear Bill Closing Daycare Loophole **AB 215/SB179 Would Stop Daycares from Posing as Private Schools**

MADISON- The Assembly and Senate Committees on Education are scheduled to hear legislation this week closing a loophole in state law that allows daycare centers to operate without licenses by simply calling themselves private schools. Assembly Bill 215 and Senate Bill 179, authored by State Rep. Penny Bernard Schaber (D-Appleton) and Sen. Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point), would close this loophole by requiring private schools that care for children two and under to obtain a license to operate a daycare.

“I’ve consulted with day care owners, private school administrators, and parents in my district and around the state, and they agree that AB 215 is the best approach to this problem,” said Rep. Bernard Schaber. “This bill will protect children from day care providers who cut corners and endanger their safety, without burdening legitimate private schools and day care centers with additional regulations.”

The loophole first came to light in May 2010, when the Appleton Fire Department closed Grace’s Garden Academy, a Fox Valley care center, for building code violations. The inspector found numerous violations, including infants sleeping in a closed basement room with no supervision or monitors, no functional smoke detectors, and a basement packed with toys from the floor to ceiling. The inspector also found a total of 37 children, ranging in age from three months to five years, under the care of only three adults. Inspectors from the state Dept. of Children & Families attempted to close the center in the fall of 2009, but Grace’s Garden was able to remain open when the owner declared it a private school.

“When I heard how easy it was for an illegal, unlicensed day care to stay open just by calling itself a private school, I knew we had to do something,” Sen. Lassa said. “Our bill will close this glaring loophole so that parents throughout Wisconsin situations like Grace’s Garden won’t happen in their community.”

The Assembly hearing will take place on Tuesday, October 4 at 10:00 a.m., with the Senate hearing to follow the next day at 11:00 a.m.

###